

Battlement Mesa School
Battlement Mesa
Garfield
Colorado

HABS No. CO-42

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
P.O. BOX 25287
DENVER, COLORADO 80225

BATTLEMENT MESA SCHOOL

This building was originally constructed in 1897 as a one-room school-house. Native red stone was hauled by team and wagon two miles from a rock quarry which supplied building material for other structures in the area.

An addition in 1907, utilizing the same native stone, resulted in the building's present "T" plan configuration. The original portion of the building is believed to have been constructed by a local builder named Reed. No information relating to Mr. Reed has been found. Structural differences between the front and rear portions suggest that a different builder was responsible for the newer rear portion.

Evidence of alteration to one set of side windows in the front suggests an even later renovation which may reflect a Prairie School influence. A concrete lintel and patched masonry evidence alteration of two single windows modified to allow for increased light.

The 1897 structure replaced an original school which had been built of logs about 1889. The one-room log school was abandoned in 1897 and became the residence of the R.O. Gardner family, who had purchased the land from the Doby family.

R.O. Gardner, also father of Albert Gardner, who taught at the Battlement School, gained recognition as a local folk hero following the Parachute train robbery of 1904. Gardner was believed to have shot and killed Kid Curry of the notorious Wild Bunch, members of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid's gang.

Land provided by George M. Sipprell in 1886 was the basis for the construction of the stone building. Sipprell, a law graduate from Maine, served as postmaster, banker, lawyer and judge in Parachute.

Other names associated with the school include members of the original Battlement Mesa School Board:

William K. Tanney
Nels M. Goode
John McGuirk

The school's first teacher was Mary Shutt. Other teachers included:

Olive Brown
June Brown
Vera Foster
Mary Luellan
Albert Gardner
Mr. Poplin

The stone school was Garfield County District #18 until the Wallace Creek School was constructed in the 1920's about five miles to the west. Battlement School became District #45 and Wallace Creek School became District #18.

Pupils at the Battlement School hauled water from a well behind the school and drank from a single tin dipper. At some point, water from Battlement Creek was piped into the school.

Enrollment sometimes required two teachers and the use of both rooms. More often the school housed 12 to 20 children and only one teacher. The older front room was often used as a sort of gymnasium. Baskets were tacked up for basketball.

The family names of children who attended Battlement School reflect a roster of who's who for the area. Erlene Murray's book Lest We Forget offers something about nearly all of these early characters from the pioneer days of Parachute. These same names are found in association with the other resources of the area.

Pontius	McGuirk	Williams	Quinn	Kerlee
Spencer	Nordstrom	Parkhurst	Mahaffey	Robertson
Werhonig	Duplice	Vance	Wells	Morrow
Ervin	Parmenter	Underwood	Gardner	Green

The last board members of District #45 were:

Clyde E. Smith
Mrs. Albert (Mona) Gardner
H. F. Morrow

Eligibility:

Battlement School appears eligible for inclusion in the National Register under criteria:

a) Because it is associated with the events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history in the Battlement Mesa area.

and

c) Because it embodies distinctive characteristics of a country school from the 19th century. Its stone construction from locally quarried rock represents a distinctive method of building.

Other uses for school building:

- Memorial service in 1918 for Ward C. Underwood, local boy killed in action in France - WWI
- Funeral 1910ish for Kramer Vance, youngster who was student at school. Possibly died of scarlet fever.
- Funerals for old-timers. Names like Nordstrom and Kerlee stand out in peoples' minds.
- Weddings. In later years was ideal for weddings and/or receptions. In the late 1940's and 1950's was equipped with kitchen facilities and plates, etc.
- School board meetings and elections.
- Dances. Many, many dances held at schoolhouse over years. Old timers remember Coda Cline who stomped and played fiddle there for years on Saturday night. Cline was accompanied by piano. Mr. Lindauer and group sometimes played. Occasionally, groups came out from Rifle. Kids were always brought along and slept in other room while Mom and Dad danced.
- Ball field in what is now sagebrush. Community field used for pickup games on weekends.
- Water (irrigation) meetings, "water fights"
- Farmers Union meetings
- Yearly Christmas program. Children dressed up and participated in play. Everyone in community attended. Many rode sleighs to get there.
- Community get-togethers - pot lucks (was actively used as community center for decade after school closed).
- Elections (polling place)
- Sunday church services (shared by different denominations)